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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by Liberal International (World Liberal Union), a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[17 February 2014]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Elimination and prevention of female genital mutilation practices around the world

Liberal International welcomes the recent statement delivered by the President of the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UN GA) on the International Day against Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation (6 February 2014), H.E. Mr. John W. Ashe, and fully reiterates his call for "governments, civil society organizations, religious leaders and community groups to work together to encourage progress towards change and to promote an end to a practice that harms so many girls and women." LI also aligns firmly with the conclusions and recommendations included in the historic United Nations resolutions adopted unanimously on the issue by the 67th Session of the UN GA in December 2012.

Liberal International is very much an organisation at the forefront of the promotion of women's rights around the world and as such it fully commits to work with its liberal member parties and cooperating organisations to encourage progress towards the elimination of this despicable form of violence against women and girls.

This statement would like to pay particular attention to the situation in the following countries where the practice affects the majority of young girls and women, according to the data provided by the World Health Organisations.

Djibouti

Deplores the fact that 93% of the Djiboutian female population has suffered different forms of female genital mutilation (FGM)

Expresses regret that 72% of the women in Djibouti are illiterate which possess a great obstacle to disseminating information about the harmful and often life-endangering effects of FGM practices

Calls on the Djiboutian National Assembly to implement the article of the National Penal Code passed in 1995 which bans FGM practices

Calls on the Djiboutian Ministry of Health to resume its work with both the United Nation Fund for Population (UNFP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in organizing public campaigns fighting female circumcision

Egypt

Remains deeply concerned that more than 80% of the women in the country have been subjected to female genital cutting

Notes with deep concern that female genital cutting, while illegal, is often performed by an experienced health practitioner which provides further legitimacy for the continued use of the practice among the Egyptian society

Notes that the national authorities should work with the local religious leaders on educating the communities about the dangers of the practice to the reproductive and sexual health of women

Invites the authorities to work with the liberal forces in the country, such as the Free Egyptian Party, to uphold the legislation passed in 2008 which outlaws the practice all together.

Guinea-Bissau

Notes with great concern that 96% of the young and adolescent girls in the country continue to be victims of female genital mutilation due to the entrenched cultural belief in the necessity of performing the practice

Commends the government for passing a nation-wide legislation banning all forms of female genital mutilation in 2012

Calls on the authorities of Guinea-Bissau to work with the African Union (AU) on implementing the Maputo Protocol of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, which guarantees an end to female genital mutilation, across the AU member states

Mali

Expresses deep concern that female genital mutilation affects 89% of the women and girls in the country

Welcomes the second public denouncement of the practice in Bamako on 6 February 2014 and encourages local non-governmental organizations such as *Tostan* to continue to work with both the government and the liberal opposition on organizing educational campaigns about the harmful consequences of the practice

Calls on the authorities to work closely with the liberal opposition *Parti Citoyen pour le Renouveau* as well as with the other democratic political forces to enact legislation that would put an end to the impunity for sexual crimes such as female genital cutting and bring to justice all perpetrators responsible for the planning and execution of such acts

Sierra Leone

Remains deeply concerned that 40 percent of the women who have undergone FGM in Sierra Leone are likely to see their babies die

Calls on the remaining six districts to sign a Memorandum of Understanding criminalizing FGM among children

Calls on the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs and the Human Rights Commission in Sierra Leone to continue to work with UNFPA and take a rights-based approach to their campaigning, by educating communities and FGM practitioners on the abusive nature of the practice

Somalia

Expresses dismay that Somalia leads the world in per capita female circumcision female genital practices affect 95% of the Somali women and girls and it is being performed as early as at the age of 4

Calls on the Somali government to work together with UNICEF and other UN agencies in tackling the cultural stigma associated with women who remain uncircumcised by advocacy and awareness-raising targeting specifically the male Somali population

Sudan

Applauds the Saleema Campaign started with EU and UNFPA/UNICEF Joint Programme support in 2008 which has brought about public declarations condemning FGM practices from 470 new Sudanese communities

Calls on the Sudanese government to criminalize the practice of female genital cutting without further delay and introduce educational and awareness raising campaigns targeting the local communities, hospitals and schools

Stressing on the fact that:

- female genital mutilation is an irreparable abuse that intentionally alters or causes injury to female genitals for non-medical reasons, with irreversible consequences, and which affects 140 million women and girls today with a further three million at risk of undergoing the procedure each year

- any form of female genital mutilation is a harmful traditional practice that cannot be considered as part of a religion, but as an act of violence against women and girls which violates their human rights

- female genital mutilation causes very serious and irreparable injuries in the short and long term to the physical and mental health and rights of women and girls who undergo it, and in some cases can even be fatal

- female genital mutilation constitutes the gravest form of discrimination against women and girls constituting a clear expression of the inequality between the sexes in countries where such practice is allowed

Commending:

- Liberal International Prize for Freedom Laureate (2014) and UN Special Ambassador for the elimination of Female Genital Mutilation Mrs. Waris Dirie for her work as a campaigner against the practice of female genital cutting

-the Liberal Democrats Party's Minister Lynn Featherstone, one half of the coalition government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain, for the recently launched FGM Community Engagement Initiative

- all women, especially those from the international liberal family members of Africa Liberal Network, Arab Alliance for Freedom and Democracy and International Network of Liberal Women, who through personal initiative and activism are fighting to end this barbaric practice

Recalling:

- Its resolution to the 58th Congress in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire (2012) which called for the strengthening of regional and international legal instruments aimed at preventing female genital mutilation

- Its resolution to the 49th Congress in Brussels, Belgium (1999) which called for the universal implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Calls on:

- the international community to organise educational and awareness raising campaigns for ending female genital mutilation worldwide by harmonizing the actions taken and by issuing recommendations and guidelines for the development and strengthening of regional and international legal instruments and national legislation

- all United Nations member states which still allow for female genital cutting to adopt and implement legislation banning this horrible practice and take all necessary legislative, political and operational measures aimed at prevention and abolition

- all United Nations member states to continue to ratify and implement through comprehensive legislation all international instruments that prohibit all forms of female gender mutilation and provide for effective sanctioning against the perpetrators and propagators of this practice (such as the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment which pays special attention to FGM)

- the international community to work together with political internationals and civil rights practitioners in order to promote child rights and women's rights, girls and women's education, and access to health care in both government policies and development cooperation as a means to contribute to the mitigation of female genital mutilation

-all international aid donor countries to follow the example of the Scottish Parliament and encourage their respective Education Ministers to appeal directly to head teachers in primary and secondary schools, asking them to ensure that both teachers and parents are trained to recognize the risks and warning signs of female genital mutilation

-all international aid donor countries to follow the example of the British government and require of their hospitals to record information on patients who have suffered or are at risk of suffering female genital mutilation

-all United Nations member states providing international aid to countries practicing female genital mutilation to include a clause in their agreements on community-led approaches to preventing and banning FGM practices

- the UNHRC to organise a special bi-annual Hearing on national progress reports on eradication of FGM, in cooperation with national governments, other UN agencies and international institutions, political party internationals, religious leaders and civil society representatives.